

The Congressional Issue Monitor

Congressman Jim Nussle

Manchester, Iowa

Summer 2001

Jim Nussle's Agenda for Iowa...

- ***Strengthening
the Family Farm***
- ***Eliminate Debt,
Lower Taxes &
Responsible Budgets***
- ***Long-term
Energy Strategy
Promoting
Renewable Sources
& Conservation***
- ***Retirement
Security for All
Iowans***
- ***Modernize
Medicare with
Prescription Drugs***
- ***Leave No
Child Behind By
Reforming
Education with
Local Control***
- ***Keep Our
Nation's Promise to
Our Veterans***
- ***Fair Trade
for Better Jobs
and Wages***

Leave No Child Behind by Reforming Education with Local Control

"No child should be left behind in Iowa's public education system. The federal government has a limited, but, important role in helping to achieve that goal. We must reform education to ensure that high standards and accountability are part of the public education system controlled by teachers and parents in our local communities. The federal government must meet its funding obligations so as to prevent unfunded federal mandates that tie the hands of local control."

Jim Nussle

AGENDA GOALS:

- 1. Leave no child behind in education**
- 2. Local Control**
- 3. Accountability**
- 4. Testing created and delivered locally**
- 5. Choice for parents**
- 6. IDEA Full Funding**

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Reforming Education with Local Control Agenda Legislation:

FY 2002 Budget (H CON RES 83) (Congress passed on May 9 & 10, 2001)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Funding

- The Budget approved by the House of Representatives on March 28, 2001, includes a \$1.25 billion increase specifically set aside for meeting the federal government's obligations under IDEA.
- Since 1996, Congress has increased IDEA funding by 178%.

No Child Left Behind Act (H.R. 1)

- Reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), including programs vital to Iowa schools such as Title 1 for disadvantaged students, the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Act.
- Provides comprehensive education reform efforts targeted at narrowing the achievement gap and providing local schools with more flexibility and control of their individual education goals.

Freedom to Learn Act (H.R. 1500)

- Authorizes local schools to establish their own discipline regulations regarding special needs students.
- Provides local school boards, administrators and teachers with the flexibility to implement uniform discipline policies for all students who pose a danger in the learning environment, whether that be with a weapon, drugs or other violent behavior.

Education IRA Plus Act of 2001 (H.R. 676)

- Education IRAs give parents and families more options as they try to provide their children with the best possible educational opportunities.
- Raises the contribution limit for education IRAs by \$500 each year for the next three years, from \$500 to \$2,000.

Student Loan Interest Deduction Act (H.R. 436)

- Because the cost of higher education is rising, students who need to borrow to finance their education should not be restricted when claiming a tax deduction for their borrowing.
- Eliminates the 60-month limit on the deduction of student loan interest; repeals the dollar limit on interest deducted; and raises the eligible income limit to \$100,000 for singles and \$150,000 for married couples.

Apples for the Teachers Act (H.R. 516)

- Provides elementary and secondary school teachers with up to a \$400 tax credit for out-of-pocket expenses such as books, school supplies, professional enrichment programs and other training not reimbursed by schools.

Tax Initiatives

**Restoring Earnings to Lift Individuals and Empower Families Act of 2001 (RELIEF Act),
H.R. 1836 (Signed into law by the President on June 7, 2001, P.L. 107-16)**

- Raises the annual contribution limit for education IRAs from \$500 to \$2,000. Expands education IRAs to cover elementary and secondary education expenses.
- Provides an above-the-line deduction for qualified higher education expenses.
- Expands the student loan interest tax deduction beyond 60 months.
- Excludes the distribution from qualified tuition plans from gross income.
- Permanently extends the employee exclusion for employer-provided education assistance.
- Expands qualified state tuition plans to include approved private colleges and universities.